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PRESS RELEASE

U.S. GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS HIV/AIDS PREVENTION WORKSHOP

DHAKA, OCTOBER 7 -- A two-day U.S. Government-funded workshop on HIV/AIDS prevention opened today in Dhaka. Bangladesh Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr. AFM Ruhul Hoque and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director Denise Rollins inaugurated this important workshop. The workshop, organized by Family Health International, is bringing together health experts, government officials, NGOs and donor organizations who work with injecting drug users, one group most at-risk for HIV/AIDS. The workshop provides an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and discuss best practices and lessons learned from Bangladesh's national HIV/AIDS program. The U.S. Government, through USAID, has contributed more than \$20 million since 2005 to reduce and prevent HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh through the "Bangladesh AIDS Project" (BAP). A new HIV/AIDS project, "Modhumita," will begin in November 2009 and will focus on working with the most-at-risk groups including commercial sex workers and injecting drug users.

Although HIV infection rates in Bangladesh remains low in most of the country, infection rates are rising among the most-at-risk groups, such as injecting drug users. Recent data shows that HIV rates in injecting drug users in one area of Dhaka reached 10.5% compared with 7% among injecting drug users in the rest of the country. The USAID Mission Director stressed that it is imperative for the government, donors, and NGOs to work together to prevent further increases in the spread of HIV in Bangladesh.

The U.S. Government, through USAID, is working to improve the lives of the people of Bangladesh, especially the very poor. USAID administers programs in Bangladesh in five broad areas: improving health and pre-primary education, creating income opportunities for rural poor,

supporting good governance, enhancing food security, and strengthening disaster preparedness and providing emergency assistance following natural disasters. The U.S. Government has provided more than \$5 billion in assistance to Bangladesh since 1971. In 2009, USAID's planned assistance will total about \$172 million.

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Note: A Bangla translation of this press release is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>

